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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000633

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TAGS: PREL MU IR

SUBJECT: OMAN'S SULTAN QABOOS TO VISIT IRAN

REF: MUSCAT 621

CLASSIFIED BY: L. Victor Hurtado, CdA; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) The Omani MFA summoned U.S., UK, and French Chiefs of Mission to a June 16 meeting. At this meeting, MFA number two, SecGen Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al-Humud Al Busaidi revealed that the Royal Diwan would announce shortly that Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said would visit Iran June 28-30. He added that he had separately briefed the resident GCC Chiefs of Mission.

¶2. (C) Sayyid Badr explained the MFA called the gatherings with "important friends and allies" to counter any media speculation or "spin." In this context, he said the meeting would be "purely bilateral" and reciprocal in nature. The Sultan had not visited Iran since the fall of the Shah. Since then, the Sultan had received many invitations, and many Iranian Presidents, including Ahmadinejad, had visited Oman. The visit would take place in the absence of "preconditions or preconceptions." The Sultan did not have a specific agenda, although in principle Oman was open to further cultural, commercial exchanges. Rather, the visit would be general in nature to promote "peace, understanding, and stability."

¶3. (C) Sayyid Badr was careful to make clear that Oman's foreign policy remained independent. It was not part of any "axis." It supported the GCC position on Abu Musa and Tunbs just as it supported good relations with Iran. The Sultan would meet with Supreme Leader Khamene'i as well as President Ahmadinejad. He would be accompanied by several cabinet ministers..

¶4. (C) In response to questions about the awkward timing of the visit given the post-election unrest, Sayyid Badr responded that the visit had "no relevance" to the election outcome and that, apart from the Sultan's congratulatory cable to Ahmadinejad (reftel), it was unlikely that Oman would have any further public statements on the election. He said that he and others had expected Ahmadinejad to win the election, but were surprised by the margin.

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